

[Nemecio Provincio]

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Nemecio Provincio (Wife Anita Provincio

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The outstanding feature of the Provincio family is their innate refinement and courtesy. Then I called at their Spanish Mission ranch home, two miles northwest of Anthony, Mr. Provincio said:

" I have lived in New Mexico all my life. I was born in the town of Old Mesilla, October 31, 1872. My parents moved their family to Cham berino in 1882. But the Rio Grande, which was more powerful then man, forced them to higher ground, so they built their home a short distance above the town, at Ojito, or little spring. They continued to plant their crops on the lower land, but they didn't take chances of living there, for they never knew when the river was going to rise and flood them out."

The Provincio boys were brought up fighting the river. "It was the big bad wolf of our lives," Nemecio said. "The Elephant Butte Dam was a God-send, senora. Before the dam came

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there was no way to control it; it was never still; always rushing, rising and overflowing. Finally, in the year of 1892, we pulled up stakes and moved to the Anthony district." [C 18-N. Amer. ?]

Mr. Provincio, his brother Victor, and his father Agapito, all settled on adjoining Terrenas. "A terrena," Nemecio explained is 36 acres. Each 2 settler was permitted to have a solar or building site in town if he wished it, and an ortaliza in back, or an extra piece of land thrown in. We were the first to settle on this land. It was all bosque or woodland, and no ditches of any kind. We worked from early morning till dark, days weeks and months, cutting down trees, clearing the ground, building our homes, plowing, planting and fighting the Rio Grande."

It seems that the Rio Grande had a habit of taking toll at the most unexpected times. "Sometimes we would go to beg hoping to rest after a hard day's work," Nemecio said, "only to be wakened by the lap, lap, of water at our doors; sometimes around our beds. It had a voice, senora, that we grew to hate--a voice that struck terror to our hearts and souls; it was there in the rising river, increasing in volume as the water rose, submerging our land, stealing our seed, quite often our homes, leaving us nothing--nothing. The newcomers can't begin to realize the hardships of the early pioneers."

Mr. Provincio paused a moment then resumed: " The greatest surprise of the early days was the morning we awoke and found our land an Island in the center of an ocean of water. The river had come up in the night and submerged the whole country. For several days we went to town in row boats. We made the first request for an irrigation ditch, and when we received it, more people began to settle on the land near us. Very often I had

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to assist people across the Rio Grande, by swimming and leading their horses or teams. I used to breed horses and kept a herd up in the Franklin mountains east of Anthony. Sometimes I would [tring?] bring several in to the ranch and when I was 3 ready to ford the Rio Grande, I would link them with a rope and swim across leading the whole group. I was forced to do this to keep from losing them, for sometimes the current was so strong that it would take a single horse two or three miles down stream before I could rescue him.

Charley Willer was a good friend to the early settlers; he was also a good business man. "Charley never lost anything in a trade," Mr Provincio said. "If we borrowed one pound of seed from him he got two in return. [He?] built the first store on the old business street west of the Santa Fe tracks. Savina Lopez, who built the little white chapel northeast of Anthony, in honor of San Jose, traded quite a bit of her land at Charley's store for groceries. At one time she owned a hundred and sixty acres in Anthony."

In speaking of schools Mr. Provincio said: "We didn't have any schools. Somebody started a private school, which I attended for awhile. That is, until it closed, for money was scarce. I used to hire out to other farmers and work all day for fifty cents. Once I was paid as much as a dollar and fifty cents, laying railroad track for the Southern Pacific, and I thought I was pretty rich."

In referring to the Pool ranch west of Anthony, Mr. Provincio observed: " Mr. Pool has some very fine land, but in the early days it sold at a very low price. Will [S ow?] [Snow?] bought it for three dollars an acre; then Mr. Snow transferred it to his wife, who sold it to S. P. Miller, brother-in-law of 4 Mrs. O. C. Story, for forty dollars an acre; S. P. Miller sold it

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to J. W. Brooks for eighty dollars an acre; J. W. Brooks sold it to Mr. J. Pool for a hundred dollars an acre, and to-day it is worth three hundred dollars an acre."

In speaking of the original land owners in his vicinity Mr. Provincio said: " I am the only one left--Guerra, Arias, Gomez, Tellez and Marquez--all had the same amount of land I have today--but they sold it for almost nothing. Many people have offered to buy my land. Always they tell me, it is very beautiful. And I feel like telling them that they can't realize how hard I worked to make it beautiful. Every time I cut down a tree I have made it a rule to put the date on it. There is one outside dated 1884."

Mr. Provincio's ranch is in that strip of land known as the " Refugio Grant," which borders the Rio Grande." This grant," he said [originated?] at the Mission La Union. When we came here there was a corporation in charge with a change of commissioners every two years. The commissioners at that time were Jessus Ochoa, Jesus Enriques, and Jacinto Perea. These men were authorized to divide the land into terrenas, or thirty-six acres to a settler."

Farming was a tedious task in the old days. " The farmers," Mr. Provincia said, "had very few implements. We ploughed with a small hand plough, and we cut our wheat with a scythe. We planted wheat, corn, frijoles (beans) and alfalfa to feed our horses.

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Sometimes I would take a load of alfalfa to El Paso to sell. The trip usually took three days. Now, with a good truck, I can make it in three hours."

In the course of his conversation Mr. Provincio said: "My distant cousin, [Eulogio?] Provincio, used to like to go camping. He usually went to the Robledos, the mountains northwest of us. One day when he returned from one of these trips I noticed that he looked very odd--others noticed it too. I guess I was more curious than anyone else, for I kept urging Eulogio to tell me why he acted so mysterious. But he tightened his lips and would tell me nothing."

Mr. Provincio paused then resumed: " Finally Eulogio took a man into his confidence, and they both went to the Robledos. When they returned I noticed that their faces wore a look of disappointment. Senora, I am telling the truth when I say, I wanted to know their secret so much that I almost burned to a cinder. But Eulogio was that way, you could burn and be damn, but he wouldn't tell what he thought was nobody's business."

Suddenly Eulogio decided to enlighten Nemocio, who, confided: " I didn't know whether to believe him or not when he told me that he had found a treasure chest in the Robleros. I was so surprised I hardly knew what to say. My lips went dry and I had to moisten them with my tongue before I could speak, but finally managed to ask him how he knew it was a treasure chest? He stared at me a moment then exclaimed:"

"Valgame Dios! Don't you think I know a treasure chest when I see it?"

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This chest was heavy--so heavy I couldn't move it. Some day, I kept telling myself, I will take tools to the Robleros and open it. But I kept putting it off and keeping my secret. The I thought, maybe I will tell somebody about it and just as quick as I though I would,

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I changed my mind and kept still. I think I was poco loco. Then I got so I couldn't sleep thinking about that treasure chest. As you know, at last I couldn't keep the secret any longer, so I took Ramon to the Bobleros with me telling him only that I wished to show him something."

" 'Yes, I know about that,' I said, impatient to hear more about the chest. 'Then what did you do?'

" 'Well, we kept on going, leading our pack burros up the mountain path. 'I guess Ramon was a little afraid of me for I kept talking to myself about gold and how rich I was going to be, and I know that he was very glad when I told him that we had come to the place where I had left the chest. Then I told him to leave the burros and follow me, for you see, I had to climb a little higher, where the chest was concealed behind a clump of mesquite, which I grabbed hold of to pull myself up. When Ramon followed my example and reached my side, he found me standing but shaking like a sick man with chills, and staring at the imprint of my coins in the wet sand. What and nothing more. My treasure chest was gone.'

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Nemecio Provencio was born in Old Mesilla, New Mexico: Oct . 31, 1872; He moved with his parents from Old Mesilla to Chamberino, New Mexico in 1882; Moved from Chamberino to Anthony New Mexico, in 1892, where, with his brother Victor and father Agapito, he settled on a terrena, or thirty-six acres adjoining the land of his brother and father, two miles northwest of Anthony, in the strip of land that borders the Rio Grande and which is known as the "Refugio Grant."

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The Provincios were the first land owners to ask for an irrigation ditch, which, when granted, was the means of bringing other settlers to this district. They cleared the land, which was all bosque, felled the trees and built their own homes.

In 1896 Nemecio Provincio married Jeasusita Lopez of Chamberino, New Mexico, who was the daughter of a Civil war veteran of the Union army. By this marriage there was one son, Fidel Provincio, who is a farmer. Mrs. Provincio died in 1899.

In 1901 Nemecio Provincio married Anita Martinez of El Paso, Texas, who bore him five boys and two girls. The children are: Louis, Raymundo, Emilio, Otellio, Anita, Ramiro and Henry. Raymundo was dragged and killed by his own horses while working on his father's ranch in 1930, an accident which shocked and grived the whole community.

Otellio has been a teacher in the Anthony Grade school for the past eight years, and Anita, who is a very fine dancer, has been teaching in the Alta Vista School for two years. Louis Provincio, who is a farmer, owns 8 his own ranch. His wife was the former Alvino Geck, who taught in the Anthony Grade School prior to her marriage. Emilio is also a farmer who owns his own ranch, and is serving his second term as County Commissioner. Emilio married ray Dutchover, who prior to her marriage, was private Secretary to Charles O'Hara of Anthony. Ramiro and Henry Provincio are pupils in the Valley High School. And Mrs. Nemecio Provincio, the mother of this commendable family, is a housewife who finds time, in addition to her other duties, to grow and cultivate some of the most beautiful flowers in the valley.

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